

Attachment 4

Executive Summary

This Executive Summary offers a comprehensive overview of the initial rollout and first year of the Promoting and Advancing Training of High Desert School Counselors (PATH-SC) program through highlighting major accomplishments, contextual factors affecting the program, challenges faced and overcome, and our vision for the future.

Accomplishments Towards Project Goals

After receiving the grant award, we immediately began making significant strides in launching the program. One of our major achievements during the program's early stages was establishing partnerships with four school districts and working in collaboration with multiple university personnel and departments. We developed a PATH-SC application in tandem with the university's Chief Enrollment Officer, and fine-tuned operational logistics to identify how funding would be distributed to PATH-SC students.

Another major accomplishment was our ability to successfully recruit highly qualified prospective school counselors. By removing financial obstacles, we saw a substantial increase in the number of applicants, resulting in a diverse pool of well-qualified candidates for school counseling positions. This enabled us to reach and exceed our GPRA target goals of admittance for this reporting period.

Of the students admitted into the program, four were entering their second year of the program. We were able to place them into internships in high-needs schools in partnership districts with qualified supervisors. We provided our first supervisor training Fall 2023 and have scheduled the winter training to occur in March 2024. Conducting the training with supervisors fulfills our goal of increasing the support they can provide to their interns when delivering services. These supervising relationships have greatly contributed to all of our interns reporting that they feel very confident and prepared to work in high needs schools after graduation.

By placing these interns, we decreased the average student to school counselor ratio from 270:1 to 160:1 in participating schools. The four interns provided support to over 1,500 students in the first four months of the school year through a combination of one-on-one sessions, group sessions, and classroom lessons. These interns have implemented evidence-based curriculum to address diverse mental health needs and ensure that the interventions are grounded in proven methodologies, enhancing the effectiveness of the counseling services provided. This commitment to comprehensive mental health support reflects the program's success in preparing interns to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the students they serve.

In addition, our partnerships with local districts resulted in three PATH-SC participants being hired by a high-needs LEA to fill school counselor positions in the district. These included two new positions in two elementary schools, that had previously had no school counselor resulting in a total of 796 students receiving school counseling services. It is noteworthy that employment began prior to completion of the school counseling program, evidence of the need for a school counselor pipeline within partnership districts and demonstrative of the quality of training received while in the program.

Overcoming Challenges Affecting Implementation

Initially, the primary obstacle was the short timeframe between the program's approval and the program application deadline, which constrained the program's visibility and created a time-related barrier for potential applicants. Despite this limited timeframe, we were able to successfully develop

and implement participant recruitment, review, and selection procedures. We used campus and local media sources to publicize the program and disseminated program information for district partner dissemination via district email listservs. This aggressive marketing approach yielded a 500% increase in the number of applications to the OSU-Cascades school counseling program. Of the number that applied, we invited 30 qualified candidates to be interviewed. In order to ensure a comprehensive and equitable assessment process, we developed a rubric to assess and make acceptance decisions in alignment with the program goals. From these interviews, we admitted 13 into the program for the 2023-2024 school year. Of the 13 admitted, two students did not matriculate into the program resulting in a total number of 11 students, exceeding our target goal. Applicants were overwhelmingly well-qualified, had diverse experiences working in schools, and met diversity requirements. As a result, we were able to establish a robust waitlist of applicants for expedited review for the '24-25 admissions cycle. The ability for us to recruit, interview, and admit qualified candidates in just twelve weeks enabled us to immediately roll out the program and start serving students in high-need LEAs.

We budgeted for an entire academic year for Year 1, not realizing that the budget period ended in December. The carryover will be used to fund the Year 1 cohort for the remaining winter and spring terms for this academic year. In addition, given our success in meeting our recruitment numbers, any remaining carryover can fund more students than targeted for subsequent years. In addition, we recognized we needed more administrative support and a budget change request was approved to allocate more funds for student workers. These student worker positions were filled for the last few months of the reporting period and successfully bolstered our ability to recruit applicants for the school year starting this summer.

Future Viability

Despite these initial challenges, the program has met and exceeded goals, and has been set-up for success throughout the life of the grant. Our GPRA data reveals a significant increase in the number of applicants, indicating growing interest and engagement in our program. This reflects the value we provide to our school communities and underscores the need for continued expansion. We distributed an annual survey to student participants and district partners regarding their experiences. A district partner shared, "So thankful for this program. We now have a pathway to meet the growing needs of our region and support to train people interested in school counseling. I feel like we won the lottery with getting this grant for Central Oregon." Three of the four interns completed the survey and all reported being "very prepared" to serve high needs schools. Notably, all of the students who submitted (9 out of 11) reported that they would recommend the PATH-SC program to others. Further, the overwhelming majority 88% (n=8) reported that their school counselor training was very aligned to the goals of the grant and the remaining 11% (n=1) reported it was aligned. In conclusion, our MHSP team has made remarkable progress in the past year. We are dedicated to building on our accomplishments, addressing challenges, and promoting mental health services in high-needs LEAs. With a strong foundation in partnerships, qualified counselors, and adaptive strategies, we are poised for sustained success in the coming years.